

PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

THE LAST CHANCE

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

BY

ANNIE E. BAILEY

DICK & FITZGERALD

PUBLISHERS

18 Ann Street, New York

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DICK & FITZGERALD, Publishers, 18 Ann Street, N. Y.

THE LAST CHANCE

A Comedy in Two Acts

By ANNIE E. BAILEY

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NEW YORK
DICK & FITZGERALD
18 ANN STREET

PS 635
K9 B155

40²⁵

MAY 18 1916

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no. 1

THE LAST CHANCE.

CHARACTERS.

FLORENCE DAVENPORT	} <i>Summer girls</i>	
AILEEN DODGE			
AUGUSTA EVANS			
GRACE GREENWOOD			
EMILY HATHAWAY			
ADA MORTIMER			
ALBERTA HOYT			
HYPATIA DREW (<i>Patty</i>)			
MARGARET HINDS (<i>Peggy</i>)	} <i>Their chaperon</i>	
AUNT CHARITY COOPER.....			
MRS. MARY CONNOR.....		 <i>Who keeps the cottage</i>
NORA.....		 <i>The maid, who reads dime novels</i>
ADDISON HILTON..... <i>Professor Pygmalion Hawkins</i>		
GLENN ALLEN..... <i>Professor Aristotle Ambrose</i>		

TIME.—*The Present.* LOCALITY.—*A secluded country town.*
TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—*About one and one-half hours.*

SYNOPSIS.

FLORENCE wants breakfast. NORA and the dime novel. Oh, for a Man! but they are prohibited. MRS. CONNOR requested to supply the deficiency. The advertisement. LORD ULLIN's daughter. The vacant rooms engaged. NORA's strategy. New boarders arrive. Girls disappointed. AUNT CHARITY fascinated. Caught without their disguises. PEGGY redeems the situation to everybody's satisfaction.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

FLORENCE.—Torn outing skirt, slippers, kimona for first entrance. Later a light summer dress.

PEGGY and PATTY.—Outing dresses.

OTHER GIRLS.—Appropriate summer dresses.

NORA.—Calico dress with large dark apron.

MRS. CONNOR.—Gingham dress and white apron. For last entrance, a nightdress with skirt fastened awry over it.

AUNT CHARITY.—About 50. ACT I, severely plain dark dress; later a more elaborate dress of black silk. ACT II, light dress and garden hat for Scene I; kimona for Scene II.

ADDISON HILTON (*Prof. Hawkins*).—Slow and phlegmatic, carrying his head thrown back and squinting. Eccentric costume, gray wig and whiskers, swallow tail coat, high collar, cane, silk hat; carries luggage. Flannels for last entrance.

GLENN ALLEN (*Prof. Ambrose*). Active and nervous. Eccentric costume; Prince Albert coat, stuffed to simulate a humped back; wears glasses, gray wig and whiskers, silk hat; carries luggage. Flannels for last entrance.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES.

ACT I.—Feather duster, folded paper in apron pocket, and letter for MRS. CONNOR. Knitting (shawl) for AUNT CHARITY. Book for ALBERTA. Flowers for AILEEN. Note for FLORENCE. Telegram, dime novel, note, chewing-gum, string and toothpicks for NORA. Post-card for ADA. Three broomsticks off stage. Fan for EMILY.

ACT II.—Butterfly net and novel for AUNT CHARITY. Handkerchief for PATTY. Letter in GLENN ALLEN's coat pocket. Coin for HILTON. Match-box for PEGGY. Red Tableau lights.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

As seen by a performer on the stage facing the audience, R., means right-hand; L., left-hand; C., center of stage; C. D., door at center; R. D., door at right; L. D., door at left. UP means toward back of stage; DOWN, toward footlights.

THE LAST CHANCE.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Living-room of MRS. CONNOR'S summer cottage. Morning. Doors C., UP R. and DOWN L. Window UP L. Fireplace R. Piano UP L. Table DOWN L. Bonbon dish, book-rack and writing material on table. Chairs around table. Arm-chair C. Divan UP R., near C. D. Several sofa pillows on divan. Tête-à-tête R. Mantel over fireplace; books, flower vases, etc., on mantel, also a white scarf on corner of mantel. Fishing-pole or umbrella near fireplace. DISCOVERED AUNT CHARITY in arm-chair, knitting a shawl; AILEEN arranging flowers on mantel; ALBERTA on divan, reading; AUGUSTA and EMILY on tête-à-tête, playing cat's cradle.*

ENTER FLORENCE L. D., *hair uncombed, wearing a torn outing skirt and kimona, stretching and yawning.*

AILEEN. Oh, girls! She got up!

EMILY. Is it for all day?

ALBERTA. Good morning, Merry Sunshine.

AUGUSTA. How artistically her hair is arranged! Just look at her slippers.

AUNT CHARITY. Good morning, dear Miss Davenport. (*Kissing her, then staring at her*) Go straight back to your room; wash your face, comb your hair, and do put on a respectable frock. Your appearance is reprehensible in the extreme.

AILEEN. Aunt Charity means you're a sight for men and angels.

FLORENCE (*stretching*). Just it. There's mighty few angels

hovering about, meaning no disrespect to this august assembly; and as for men— Well, if there were just one man in this poky old place— (*Jumps on table and takes candy from bonbon dish*) if it were only a Henglish butler for this menage of Mrs. Connor's.

AUNT C. Miss Davenport! How unmaidenly!

FLORENCE. Aunt Charity, I *shall* sit on this table and swing my feet, and I *will* eat candy before breakfast—

ALBERTA. You mean before dinner.

FLORENCE. And I will not wear out my best dresses just for girls. (*Calls*) Nora! And besides, it looks as if it were going to be another stupid rainy day. (*Impatiently*) Nora!

ENTER NORA R. D., *holding up apron in which she has a dime novel hidden.*

NORA. Yes ma'am.

FLORENCE (*chews candy and swings feet*). What is there left for breakfast, Nora?

NORA. Well, there's oatmeal, Miss Florence.

FLORENCE. Oatmeal! What a surprise! What a treat! We've had oatmeal every day since the Declaration of Independence. What did you have for breakfast, girls?

AILEEN.

ALBERTA. } Omelet, sausages, mutton chops.

AUGUSTA.

NORA. All them things has to be cooked, Miss, and Mis' Connor's out in the vegetable garden, and I can't stop to cook anything with all these peas to shell and get done for dinner; they ought to be on now.

EMILY (*pulling novel from apron, which NORA holds gathered as if filled with peas*). Nothing like having an inspiration in one's work. Which one of you lent Nora this?

GIRLS. } Not me.

 } Bet your life I didn't, etc.

AUNT C. If I thought that any of you young ladies—but I cannot believe—it is too much to imagine—should ever read such—

NORA. Don't you fret, Miss Charity; I'd scorn to borrow it of any of 'em. I found it in the ash-heap an' it had your name on it, an' I knowed it would be good.

EMILY (*turning the pages*). Girls, it's true. Here, Nora! It's safe.

NORA. Gee! But I thought I was a-goin' to lose it.

AUNT C. This is base slander—calumny. Unless some de-tractor has forged my signature, my name was never on a ten-cent novel in my life.

AUGUSTA. Maybe this novel did cost fifteen cents in this little town; don't be too hard on her, Emily.

FLORENCE. Go right on, Nora; take your peas and dime novels and shell them serenely in the kitchen, while I starve. (EXIT NORA R. D.) Why on earth didn't I accept that invitation of cousin Cecile to go to the mountains? There'd have been at least a breath of masculine atmosphere there, if it hadn't been anybody but the blind old postmaster. But there would have been; for Addison Hilton and Glenn Allen were going up for at least a week.

AILEEN. I've known Addison Hilton as long as you have, and you needn't talk as if you had a copyright on him.

EMILY. And Glenn Allen and I used to play together when we were in pinafores, and I guess it wasn't wholly because you were going to the mountains that they planned to go. I was going there myself.

ALBERTA. So was I.

AUGUSTA. Me, too. You couldn't have monopolized both of them.

AUNT C. Young ladies, such remarks are extremely un-maidenly. In spite of your temporary pettishness, I feel sure that you will agree with me that it has been an absolute relief to be secluded for a space from those importunate young men.

GIRLS. No, sir-e-e-, not much, etc.

AUNT C. This is indeed a painful subject, but while we are on it, I may as well be firm and frank with you. Glenn Allen and Addison Hilton are not fit associates for young ladies of your station. (*Confidentially*) Glenn Allen, my dears, is absolutely loud; think of his green hat and his bright red neckties. A breach of every law of taste! And Addison Hilton—of course I realize that you couldn't have known it—but it's absolutely true, for Mrs. Walker-Kingston told Mrs. Hemington and Mrs. Hemington told me—that he has actually been known to play billiards on Sunday. (*Exclamations of horror from the GIRLS*) And a man who will play billiards on Sunday will *steal*, yes, he will.

AILEEN (*jumping up*). That's true, Aunt Charity; I've seen him steal. And what's more, I'd give a dollar to see him do it again, this minute

AUNT C. What? What did he steal? Where? When?

AILEEN. It was at the last ball game between Brown and Princeton; he stole three bases. (*Girls all applaud; AUNT CHARITY looks indignant*)

AUNT C. I never could understand your ball games where young ladies eat peanuts and chew gum; but I know this; I am thankful that we shall not be troubled by Glenn Allen and Addison Hilton during this outing.

ENTER MRS. CONNOR R. D.

MRS. CONNOR. Top o' the mornin' to yez, Miss Florence. Didn't they give yez any breakfast at all, at all? Come right out in the kitchen with me, swateheart, an' tell me whether yez'll have omelets or mutton chops.

FLORENCE. Mrs. Connor, you're a jewel, but——

AILEEN. All Miss Florence wants is——

AUGUSTA. }
ALBERTA. } A man!

MRS. C. (*advancing*). Shure, Miss Florence, yez ain't a cannibal, are yez? I'll get yez anything for breakfast in reason but——

FLORENCE. Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Connor; there's no one here I have any intention of eating—but—oh girls, why can't Mrs. Connor help us? Alberta, bring the best chair in the house. Mrs. Connor, come right here, do. (*Leads MRS. CONNOR to chair placed front by ALBERTA*) Everybody do your best to persuade Mrs. Connor to supply the deficiency.

MRS. C. Shure, yez don't need to be after soft-soapin' me like this. I intended all the time to get yez some breakfast.

FLORENCE. Never mind that now; "To business that we love, we rise betimes, and go to with delight" even without omelets or mutton chops.

EMILY. You look warm, Mrs. Connor; let me get you a fan. (*Fans MRS. CONNOR vigorously*)

ALBERTA. Don't you want a sofa pillow? (*Crowds two behind her*)

AILEEN. Have a chocolate; have two. (*Crams them into MRS. CONNOR'S mouth*)

AUNT C. Young ladies, Mrs. Connor perhaps has duties to attend to.

MRS. C. Faith, yes; the pertaties ought to be boilin' this minute.

AUGUSTA (*pushing her back in her chair*). I'll run right out and tell Nora to put them on. [EXIT R. D.]

MRS. C. Faith, I feel just like Queen Victory a-bein' crowned.

FLORENCE. That's it. And we, your humble servants, have a petition to present to you. Down on your knees, girls. Don't you know your duties to a sovereign? (*Girls kneel, except FLORENCE at L. C. EMILY kneels on sofa pillow*)

ENTER AUGUSTA R. D.

AUNT C. How unmaidenly!

AUGUSTA (*to EMILY*). Here, Emily Hathaway, get off that sofa pillow. It took me three weeks to embroider that.

ALBERTA (*pulling AUGUSTA to her knees*). For shame! To think of such a trifle in this crisis!

FLORENCE (*bowing low*). Mrs. Connor, have you a spare room? (*AUNT CHARITY from behind the table shakes her head threateningly at MRS. CONNOR*)

AILEEN. This suspense is terrible.

MRS. C. That's what I have—just one. (*Girls jump up and dance about*)

EMILY (*hurls sofa pillow, narrowly missing AUNT CHARITY*). Oh, I beg your pardon, Aunt Charity. (*Aside*) Mercy! I've swallowed my gum.

AUGUSTA (*to MRS. CONNOR*). Advertise for a man.

FLORENCE (*running to table*). Let me write the advertisement.

ALBERTA (*same business*). Make him young.

AILEEN (*same business*). And handsome.

EMILY (*same business*). And rich, with a touring car. (*AUNT CHARITY crosses and talks with MRS. CONNOR*)

AUGUSTA (*also running to table*). And six feet tall.

AUNT C. (*to MRS. CONNOR*). Mrs. Connor, you recollect distinctly that when I engaged these rooms, I did it with the express understanding that you were not to let any room to any one else except gentlemen of mature age and quiet habits.

MRS. C. Never yez worry, Miss Charity, I'll stick to my bargain.

AUNT C. Young ladies, the room is already advertised.

MRS. C. (*rising*). I'm powerful sorry, darlins, that part of yez wasn't men; but I'll do all I can for yez, everything considered, everything considered. [EXIT R. D.]

AILEEN. Now what did she mean by "Everything considered"?

FLORENCE. Do you know, Aunt Charity?

AUNT C. Hm—m. I left my reading glasses up-stairs. I must go for them. [EXIT AUNT CHARITY L. D.]

AILEEN. She does know, old killjoy!

AUGUSTA. She's bribed Mrs. Connor.

AILEEN. Let's have an investigation. (ALL gather indignantly c.)

ENTER PEGGY and PATTY C. D.

PEGGY. Where in the world have you girls been? The water's like glass.

AILEEN. What's the use of getting all tanned up and blistering your hands. I'll bet they are blistered now, Patty. (*Crosses to PATTY and tries to look at her hands; PATTY keeps hands behind her*)

PATTY. No, they aren't; and anyway, I love to row.

FLORENCE (*going forward and speaking grandiloquently*).

To row or to be rowed, that is the question.

Whether 'tis better in the mind to suffer

The outraged fortune of too-much-bechaperoned femaies——

Oh, hang the blank verse; but I can go Hamlet one better; I know my own mind, anyway. Passive voice for me. I love *to be rowed*.

PEGGY. Florence is always pining for masculine society.

AILEEN. May be we'll have it yet. The southwest chamber is advertised and Mrs. Connor may let it to a real live man and——

PEGGY. Nonsense! We've heard the possibilities of that room ever since we've been here; for my part, I hope it will remain unoccupied.

AUGUSTA. Serves you right if we don't tell you a thing we know.

PATTY. By all means, don't. Every time you rehearse your sorrows you get moodier and moodier. (*Pause*) Let's do something.

ALL. All right. What?

PATTY. Let's rehearse "Lord Ullin's Daughter" for the Church supper. You say it, Peggy, and we'll do the acting.

AUGUSTA. Me for the chief. We ought to be letter perfect in it by next Saturday evening.

PEGGY. Hold, gentlemen, I'm stage-manager; moreover, I'll dress the bride. (*Pins scarf on EMILY's head*) You, (*to FLORENCE*) Lord Ullin, go saddle your steed. Carry Mrs. Connor a

complimentary ticket, Florence. Alberta, you're the boatman. Aileen and Patty, you're the armed men, you remember, and you belong with Lord Ullin—that's Florence. (EXEUNT R. D., ALL *except PEGGY and ALBERTA*) Now, I'll say the lines and you do the acting. (*While PEGGY mounts the divan, ALBERTA draws arm-chair in front of tête-à-tête for a boat, takes fishing-pole or umbrella, stands leaning on it beside arm-chair. PEGGY recites while others pantomime as directed. The success of this pantomime depends upon the vivacity with which it is burlesqued*)

LORD ULLIN'S DAUGHTER.

A chieftain to the Highlands bound
(AUGUSTA and EMILY *rush in from R. D., stop between tête-à-tête and ALBERTA*)

Cries, "Boatman, do not tarry,
(EMILY *extends hand appealingly to ALBERTA; AUGUSTA feels in imaginary pockets*)

And I'll give thee a silver pound
(AUGUSTA *extends money to boatman*)

To row us o'er the ferry."
(AUGUSTA *waves arm right while EMILY clings to her in terror*)

"Now who be ye would cross Loch Gyle,
(ALBERTA *surveys AUGUSTA, arms folded on chest*)

"This dark and stormy water?"
(ALBERTA *indicates water by broad sweep of left arm*)

"Oh, I'm the chief of Ulva's Isle,
(AUGUSTA *points to herself*)

And this, Lord Ullin's daughter.
(AUGUSTA *puts arm around EMILY and chuckles her under chin with left hand*)

And fast before her father's men
(AUGUSTA *indicates R. D., with right hand*)

Three days we've fled together.

(AUGUSTA *shows three fingers of left hand to ALBERTA*)

And if he finds us in the glen
Our blood will stain the heather."

(EMILY and AUGUSTA *show terror; EMILY kneels to ALBERTA*)

Out spoke this hardy Highland wight,
"I'll go, my chief, I'm ready;

(ALBERTA *nods to AUGUSTA, turns boat around*)

It is not for your silver bright,
(ALBERTA *shakes head emphatically at CHIEF*)

But for your winsome lady."

(ALBERTA *kisses EMILY's hand*)

But still, as wilder blew the wind,
(ALBERTA *helps EMILY into boat; AUGUSTA and ALBERTA take places at arm of chair; they rock the chair, making slow progress left*)

And as the night grew drearer,
Adown the glen rode armed men;
Their trampling sounded nearer.

(*Tapping of broomsticks off R. D., to imitate galloping*)

But still they rowed amid the roar
Of waters fast prevailing;
(ALBERTA, AUGUSTA and EMILY *look apprehensively over shoulders to R. and row faster*)

Lord Ullin reached that fatal shore;
(FLORENCE, AILEEN and PATTY ENTER R. D., *riding on broomsticks and stop in front of tête-à-tête*)

His wrath was changed to wailing.
(*Shakes fists at boat, then weeps and rubs eyes with knuckles*)

For sore dismayed, through storm and shade
His child he did discover;
(*Shade eyes with both hands, gazing at rocking boat*)

One lovely hand was stretched for aid
And one was round her lover.

(EMILY kneeling in chair, extends one hand over back of chair to FLORENCE, puts other arm tightly around AUGUSTA'S neck)

"Come back! Come back!" he cried in grief
(FLORENCE extends arms to boat)

Across the stormy water,
(FLORENCE clasps hands dramatically over heart)

And I'll—

ENTER GRACE and ADA very noisily c. d. ADA carries a post-card. PEGGY, PATTY, FLORENCE and AILEEN crowd forward.

ALL. Any mail?

AUGUSTA. Back, varlets. Behold in us Lord Something-or-other, the chief of Ulva's Isle, and this, Lord Ullin's daughter. We are eloping on this staunch craft, and

"Fast before her father's men
Three days we've fled together;
And if they find us in the—"

GRACE (putting hand over AUGUSTA'S mouth). Oh, ring off. We've got something to say.

ADA. Girls, something has happened; no, something is happening; no, something is going to happen.

GRACE. Sh! Where's Aunt Charity?

AILEEN. She isn't here.

ADA. Look out. If she should find out it's going to happen she'd pack us off to New York by the next train.

ALL. What is it? When? How?

ADA (flourishing post-card). Just read this.

FLORENCE (taking card). Well, I should say, "Read this." It's my own card.

GIRLS (following FLORENCE left front). What is it?

ADA. If she doesn't tell, I shall. He ought not to have written on a postal.

ALL. HE?

GRACE. Who do you suppose?

PEGGY. Oh, Reggy Vastor or Cornelius Anderbilt.

FLORENCE (*dancing around*). Oh girls, they're coming; they're both coming.

PATTY (*sarcastically*). Indeed!

ALL. But *WHO*?

FLORENCE. Why, Addison Hilton and Glenn Allen. Listen. (*Reads*) M-m-m-

EMILY. Oh, put in all the trimmings. "Dearest Florence" or is it something stronger?

FLORENCE. Never you mind. Here's the important part. (*Reads*) "Have just received your note, so know where to find you. Have written to engage rooms at the same cottage. Addison and I will be with you in four days. Glenn Allen." (*Lays post-card on table*) Girls, what will Aunt Charity say?

ADA. Poor thing! She'll be shocked past recovery.

ALBERTA. She mustn't know it.

FLORENCE. Don't any one breathe a word.

AILEEN. When did they say they'd be here?

FLORENCE. Four days from to-day.

AILEEN. Better see when that post-card was written.

FLORENCE. July 16th. And this is the twentieth. Great hats; they're due this minute! And look at my hair. Some one come and help me do it up. (*Begins hastily to arrange hair, GOING UP stage*)

EMILY. I've got to change my dress. (*GOES UP stage*)

AUGUSTA. So have I. You ought to have dressed in the first place. (*GOES UP stage*)

FLORENCE (*aside*). Spiteful thing.

GRACE. I got my nose dreadfully sunburned yesterday. Is it red? (*GOES UP stage*)

PATTY (*DOWN stage*). All that fuss over a man! (*GIRLS UP stage, whispering*)

PEGGY. Come on. It's just the right time of day to fish for cunners.

PATTY. I'm with you. [EXEUNT PEGGY and PATTY C. D.

ENTER AUNT CHARITY L. D., *unobserved by the GIRLS who are whispering.*

AUNT C. What is the occasion of such unseemly confusion?

FLORENCE (*confusedly*). M-m-m, er—nothing.

AILEEN. We are just going to dress for dinner.

AUGUSTA (*to AILEEN*). You've saved the day.

[EXEUNT ALL GIRLS L. D.

AUNT C. (GOES UP C. and watches the GIRLS off). How un-maidenly! (GOES DOWN to table) Let me think. In the confusion I have forgotten what I came for. Oh yes, I know. My knitting. (Looks for it on table; finds postal and reads it) Why—oh—ah—young ladies, I perceive the cause of so much unusual excitement. Glenn Allen and Addison Hilton! Ah, but Mr. Glenn Allen, you'll not find her here; she will be back in New York in another twelve hours. (Reads) "Written to engage rooms at the same cottage." The presumption of it! Really, this is unpardonable in Mrs. Connor. I shall interview her at once.

ENTER MRS. CONNOR R. D., with feather duster.

MRS. C. (arranging room). Howly Mither! Sure, thim girls do be right smart at kicking up a clutter. An' it's Mary Connor that 'ud be after makin' 'em clane up after thimselves if they wa'n't that put to it to know what to do with thimselves that—

AUNT C. (interrupting). What does this mean, Mrs. Connor? What construction, I demand, am I to put upon this? (Tapping postal)

MRS. C. (dusting furiously). Sure, an' I don't know. I ain't yer private secretary.

AUNT C. (stamping). Mrs. Connor, do you mean to treat this subject with levity when you yourself have been guilty of per-fidy, perjury, contumacy, even?

MRS. C. (brandishing duster). I don't know what one of thim things is, but if they mane what yer look, ye're a liar. (Drives AUNT CHARITY behind tête-à-tête)

AUNT C. (flourishing postal). They mean that you are the one who has practised deceit. You promised not to let your un-occupied room to any frivolous young gentleman; and what do I find? A note, madam, to Miss Davenport, saying that they are coming this very day, the two men whom I most wished to guard against. And when these two boarders come, nine others shall leave; I and my charges shall return to New York at once.

MRS. C. (arms akimbo). Sure, yer do be makin' trouble fersilf, a-pryin' into other folkses' business. Was one of 'em named Glenn Allen?

AUNT C. He was.

MRS. C. It was a Mr. Glenn Allen that I writ to mesilf yes-tiddy an' tell him I did, ma'am, as you yersilf was after a-tellin' me to say—sure, an' it was yer very words I used—that if he

was less than fifty, niver a step could he come; an' if he had bad habits, he couldn't come at all, at all.

AUNT C. Mrs. Connor, you didn't say *that*!

MRS. C. Well, it meant that. But anyway, here it is, just as ye writ it out fer me. (*Takes folded paper from apron pocket*) "Honored Gentleman: this cottage is especially designed for professional gentlemen of advanced years. We assure you that the gas—gas——"

AUNT C. (*prompting*). Gastronomic.

MRS. C. (*aside*). Sure, where's the gas? But never moind. (*Reads with difficulty*) "the gastronomic accommodations are above reproach, the situation one of undisturbed serenity. In return, we require references as to the applicant's character, morality, and sobriety. None but those who fulfil the conditions need apply." The priest always called me a good speller, but it's one thing ter spell an' another ter pronounce. But I writ it, I did, jist as yer give it ter me, though, fer me own part, I niver could see what hurt it would do the young ladies ter——

AUNT C. (*moving haughtily L.*). Mrs. Connor, I prefer not to discuss my methods of chaperonage. It is sufficient that I object to having my charges brought into the company of the two young men in question who applied to you for lodging. As they are not coming, we shall remain here as we intended. I believe that is all, Mrs. Connor. [EXIT AUNT CHARITY L. D.]

MRS. C. (*following and mimicking her gait, shaking fist after AUNT CHARITY*). An' I believe it ain't, bad cess ter yer. Sure it's Mrs. Connor as has put up long enough with yer mane, high-falutin' ways. Yer jist wait. The next time ye want yer breakfast in yer room—Oh, yis, Mrs. Connor will be so kind as ter serve Miss Charity's breakfast in her room——Ye jist wait.

[EXIT L. D.]

ENTER FLORENCE, *neatly dressed*, AILEEN, EMILY, AUGUSTA, ALBERTA, ADA and GRACE C. D.

ADA. Is it dinner time? I'm as hungry as a graven image, as my grandfather used to say. What is a graven image?

ENTER NORA R. D.; *she is out of breath*.

NORA. Where is Miss Florence? Here's a telegram for her.

FLORENCE (*reading telegram*). "Have been obliged to change plans. Shall not come at all. Glenn Allen." (*Crushes telegram*)

and throws it to floor. Cries on AUGUSTA'S shoulder and is supported out of the room by all the GIRLS who EXIT amid exclamations of anger and disappointment)

NORA (*peers suspiciously about the room as if to discover an eavesdropper*). Now is my chance. I might have given it to her but that would have spoiled it all. Where shall I hide it? Ha! the table. Where is the secret missive? (*Hunts for note concealed in dress*) Ah, miladies, you have a friend in this cruel court that you little dream of—where did I put the thing, anyway?—who will stand by you to the last drop of her blood and her sacred honor. But hark! Footsteps approach. Ha!

ENTER MRS. CONNOR L. D. NORA *appears confused*.

MRS. C. What's that yer tryin' ter hide in yer waist? Oh, I see ye.

NORA (*hanging head*). Nothin'.

MRS. C. (*putting hand on NORA'S shoulder*). Sure, girl, if it's anythin' of the young ladies' ye've been after takin', ye'd better put it back. We can't have any of that in this house.

NORA. I ain't been swipin' Mis' Connor; honest, I ain't. It's only a piece of gum Miss Florence giv me an' I've got it somewheres here in my waist. (*Produces gum bristling with string and toothpicks*) Won't you have half?

MRS. C. Give me the string an' toothpicks for my half. Now get about yer work an' be an honest girl.

NORA. I'll be through in a minute. (EXIT MRS. CONNOR L. D.) My chance. (*Finds note in back of waist by a violent contortion; waves it in air*) Foiled at last! I am unobserved. (*Slips it under the book-rack on table*) But what if they shouldn't think to look under the book-rack? I never thought of that. I shall have to write another communication to tell 'em it's here. (*Takes paper and pencil from table. Writes*) M-m-m—center table—rack—How do you spell destiny? (*After meditating*) Destiny. There! [EXIT R. D., *folding note*.

ENTER MRS. CONNOR and AUNT CHARITY L. D., MRS. CONNOR *carrying a letter*.

MRS. C. Yis, Miss Charity, there's two of 'em an' I suppose they're middle aged men. I've jist got a letter saying they'll be here to-day. Nora brought it when she came from the post-

office. Read it. (*Looks over AUNT CHARITY'S shoulder as the latter reads*) "pursue—o——"

AUNT C. "Scientific investigations."

MRS. C. I'm doubtin'. That don't mean they're detectives, does it?

AUNT C. Oh, no. They are coming to study nature; they are biologists. And they saw our advertisement for a secluded room for gentlemen of mature age and quiet habits. I feel so relieved. Mrs. Connor, you are an excellent manager.

MRS. C. Thank ye. (*Aside*) That's to make up, I suppose, for what she said when she found that postal. (*Busies herself R.*)

AUNT C. Pygmalion Hawkins! What a romantic name! And Aristotle Ambrose! A good reliable name but not so poetic. I wonder if my dress is in readiness. Pygmalion Hawkins! Ah—h! [EXIT L. D.]

MRS. C. Well, if she ain't gone off with my letter! I'll follow here up and ask her for it. [EXIT L. D.]

ENTER ALBERTA, AILEEN, EMILY, FLORENCE, ADA and GRACE C. D.
FLORENCE *is reading a note.*

FLORENCE. What can Nora have meant by giving me this piece of jargon with such an air of mystery.

ADA. Read it again, Florence.

FLORENCE. "Center table; southwest corner; under book-rack; folded paper; on it hangs your destiny."

EMILY. Ugh. Doesn't it make you feel creepy?

AUGUSTA. I can feel my hair rising on end.

GRACE. Why don't you look under the book-rack and see?

FLORENCE. You do it, Grace; I don't want to.

GRACE (*backing away*). It isn't addressed to me.

AILEEN (*discovering paper under book-rack*). Behold in me the hero. Here it is, Florence.

FLORENCE (*reads*). "Be secret. Be wary. Be discreet. A viper hath stung thee. A wild cat did bite thee. She hath taken the spice of life from thee all on account of base jealousy. If you are not greatly watchful, its pizen fangs will again be buried in your writhing flesh and her murderous claws will again be tearing their eyes from your innocent sockets. And will you let this base vampire again deprive you of your natural rights? Hist! When Satan his fiery chariot again wheels to battle in yonder vaporous vault, then shall come what you ain't got but

what in thy nocturnal orations you have from day to day and night unto night partitioned. Your hidden friend."

ALBERTA. What does she mean?

AILEEN. The girl is crazy.

FLORENCE. Where did she ever get such expressions?

EMILY. From that classic of Aunt Charity's, most likely.

ADA. Do you suppose she really did mean anything?

FLORENCE. We never can tell from this. Let's call her in.
(At R. D.) Nora! Mercy! Browning is simple beside this.

ENTER NORA R. D.

NORA. Have you found it?

AUGUSTA. We've found a paper with some words on it, and we want you to explain them.

NORA. You don't want me to explain them all.

FLORENCE. Yes, Nora; all.

NORA. Gracious, Miss Florence, I do know what they mean sepritly, but all together they means somethin' is a-goin' to happen.

EMILY. But what about the viper and the wildcat?

NORA. Why, that's Miss Charity.

EMILY. To be sure, Nora; we didn't give you credit for so much penetration.

NORA. Oh, I saw how mean she used you about them young gents.

FLORENCE. But, Nora, what is it that's going to happen?

NORA. Why, couldn't you tell that from the missive? There's somebody a-comin'. Guess who.

ALL. How can we? Do tell.

NORA. Well, when I brought the mail this morning, there was a letter for Mrs. Connor from New York.

ALL. New York!

NORA. And after she'd read it, she laid it on the winder-sill while she went to carry Miss Charity's breakfast up to her—

ALL. Yes?

NORA. And I'd jest had time to read the end of it 'cause the end is always the most important, when she come in. I think she suspicioned me, 'cause she took the letter an' put—

FLORENCE. But what was the end of it?

NORA. This was how it read: "Yours truly—" (GIRLS expectant) But I couldn't remember the names.

ALL. Oh-h-h.

NORA. I couldn't pernounce 'em; but one began with H and one with A.

AILEEN. Hilton and Allen, by all that's wonderful.

NORA. Ye-es. I guess that's it.

FLORENCE. Nora, you're a dear. Next time we go shopping, we'll bring you a box of chocolates.

NORA. No, miss; I ain't done nothin' but what's my duty.

EXIT R. D.

EMILY. Girls, it's too good to be true.

AILEEN. Aunt Charity has certainly relented.

ALBERTA. She's keeping this for a surprise.

FLORENCE. She isn't so bad after all. Three cheers for Aunt Charity. (FLORENCE *leads cheering*)

ALL. Rah! Rah! Rah! Aunt Charity!

ENTER PEGGY and PATTY C. D.

PEGGY. Wherefore this unseemly levity?

PATTY. How unmaidenly!

ADA. Don't you say a word against Aunt Charity.

GRACE. What do you suppose she's done?

PEGGY. Forbidden us to leave the house until after moonrise or ordered a diet of peaches and cream for our complexions.

AILEEN. It's mean to make fun of the poor old soul, Peggy; she means well.

PATTY. What a change of heart.

FLORENCE. She's actually going to let Addison and Glenn come and they're coming to-day.

PEGGY. A miracle! No!

PATTY. You must be misinformed.

AUGUSTA. No. Nora saw a letter to Mrs. Connor— But here comes Aunt Charity.

ENTER AUNT CHARITY L. D. *She wears a silk dress.*

PEGGY (DOWN R., to PATTY). There must be something in it; that dress speaks volumes.

FLORENCE (*giving hand to AUNT CHARITY*). Good morning, Aunt Charity; how well you are looking!

AILEEN. What a beautiful morning, Aunt Charity!

EMILY. What a becoming dress!

AUNT C. Thank you, all. Now, young ladies, I have something important to say to you.

ALBERTA. It's coming.

AUNT C. I'm delighted to find you in such good humor, such high spirits this morning; for I have something to ask of you. Now, it is possible—mind, I do not say probable—that there may be guests arrive this morning; and, while I do not wish you to be officious, I do wish you to be considerate and—er—maidenly.

ALL. Yes, yes, Aunt Charity.

FLORENCE. We understand perfectly, Aunt Charity.

ENTER MRS. CONNOR R. D.

MRS. C. Faith, here they be now in the station team.

[EXIT C. D.

PEGGY. Do I wake, or am I dreaming? (*All GIRLS except PEGGY and PATTY rush to window. AUNT CHARITY DOWN L.*)

AUNT C. How unmaidenly! Leave the window at once and compose yourselves. (*GIRLS dance back to R.*)

FLORENCE. We saw them anyway.

AILEEN. Oh, girls, isn't this lovely?

ENTER MRS. CONNOR C. D.

MRS. C. Right this way, gentlemen. (*Holds portieres open for them*)

PEGGY. The conquering heroes—— Oh my!

ENTER ADDISON HILTON and GLENN ALLEN C. D. *They are disguised as PROF. HAWKINS and PROF. AMBROSE, carry luggage, etc. As they advance, AMBROSE removes HAWKINS' hat, dusts his coat sleeves, etc. GIRLS look amazed.*

GLENN ALLEN. Congratulations, my dear Pygmalion; this is a splendid place for bugs and butterflies.

ADDISON HILTON. Ja. Ezpecially de putterflies. (*PROFESSORS bow obsequiously to AUNT CHARITY who appears flattered; GIRLS act their disgust; PEGGY clasps PATTY ecstatically*)

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—Same as ACT I. One week later. A screen has been placed behind the tête-à-tête almost at right angles with front of stage. Pack of cards under the piano cover.

ENTER AUNT CHARITY C. D.; wears summer dress and hat, carrying butterfly net under arm and reading a novel.

AUNT C. (*reads*). "Yes, said the Countess Alfreda, 'from the first blissful moment my eyes rested on your face, I recognized in you my affinity.'" (*Closes book on finger; sits R. of table*) The dear thing! I know exactly how she felt. Until this minute I never could comprehend love at first sight in romances; but truth is stranger than fiction. I had woven a romance about the name of Professor Pygmalion Hawkins, but one can never tell what destiny has in store for one. He did squint. And he must be considerably older than Professor Aristotle Ambrose. And he has a decided accent. But Professor Aristotle Ambrose! (*Clasps hands dramatically*) What a bond of sympathy there is between us! The same tastes; the same opinions. What matters it if he is a little older than I? He need never fear that I shall let the discrepancy in age make any difference. (*PROFESSORS appear at C. D., seeing AUNT CHARITY, they try to retreat, but she sees them and rushes to the door*) Good afternoon, Professor Hawkins. Charmed, Professor Ambrose, charmed. (*Leading them DOWN*) I have been waiting a good half hour to join you in your quest for specimens along the shore.

ENTER NORA C. D., hides behind the screen. During the following action she peeps cautiously, and in pantomime expresses lively emotion.

HILTON. But dose young ladies! How can dey endure midout your bresence?

AUNT C. Thank you, Professor, for the compliment; but the young ladies are out boating for an hour or two; so the weight of responsibility is temporarily lifted from my weary shoulders.

When they go rowing, I always sit on the shore to chaperone, for the motion of the boat makes me uncomfortable.

ALLEN. The most satisfactory method in the world, Miss Cooper.

HILTON. I should think de young ladies would lofe de poating.

AUNT C. They do. They always like that which I abhor. The first of this outing was made very unpleasant. Until you arrived, there was no one with whom I was in sympathy in the least. But now—(*Long pause, in which the MEN look at each other and at the ceiling*)

ALLEN. But what made it unpleasant, Miss Cooper?

AUNT C. (*extending hands toward them confidingly*). I can trust implicitly in your discretion, I know I can.

HILTON. Bet yer life—er—I mean, oui, mademoiselle—er—I mean, ja, mein fräulein.

ALLEN. Professor Hawkins speaks a great many languages, Miss Cooper.

AUNT C. (*bowing*). A rare accomplishment. When I chose this place for our outing, I did so in order to rescue the young ladies, especially two of them, from the undesirable attentions of two young men—I will not call them gentlemen—one of whom a scapegrace by the name of Glenn Allen, is actually known to have stolen.

ALLEN (*jumping from chair*). What? What did he steal?

AUNT C. Why, I don't know exactly what it was but it was at one of those disgraceful ball games. (*MEN laugh; AUNT CHARITY looks surprised; ALLEN returns to seat. An uncomfortable pause*) Well, to continue, even after that one of the girls wrote to this same degenerate, inviting him and his friend here.

ALLEN. How did you prevent the catastrophe?

AUNT C. By firmness, my dear Professor, and by a little diplomacy in my relations with Mrs. Connor. And your arrival has put an end to my uneasiness. You cannot imagine how delighted I was to find that the room had been engaged by two such chivalrous gentlemen of the old school. (*MEN look at each other; finally HILTON rises painfully and bows over his cane*)

HILTON. Don't—er—mention it, Miss Cooper.

AUNT C. But we are wasting precious moments. In an amateur way I am deeply interested in your science. Although I have never collected specimens, I once embroidered a butterfly on a sofa pillow.

ALLEN. Remarkable!

AUNT C. (*rising and taking net*). Aren't you anxious to pursue your scientific investigations?

ALLEN. Didn't you say you couldn't go out of sight of the young ladies?

AUNT C. But we can keep close to the shore.

HILTON. Not so. Efery putterfly iss on de opposite side of de island.

ALLEN. Yes, madam; butterflies gather on the north side of the island to fly south for the winter.

AUNT C. How interesting!

ALLEN. So we can't go. It's too long a walk for you.

AUNT C. By no means. I will signal the girls to return. You will find me on the shore by the big rock, awaiting you with impatience and expectancy.

[EXIT C. D., *with simpering smiles and deep bows*.

HILTON (*with the tails of coat held as for skirt-dancing, mincing after her*) "In the shade of the old apple tree." It's up to you to keep that date, Glenn; I shall be missing. It's you she's laying for, anyhow.

ALLEN. She'll wait by that big rock for one while. I hope it will be soft. Well, I'm glad the girls know a third base from a diamond necklace. Accused of stealing, am I? (*Shakes fist after AUNT CHARITY*) Whew! But it's beastly hot. The girls are all gone and she is disposed of. Why can't we cool off?

HILTON. Sure. Nobody's around. (*They take off glasses, wigs, whiskers, coats, throwing them right and left, still talking*) Now you've dragged me down here, I hope you're satisfied. Whittaker! Haven't they been cool!

ALLEN. I don't know what to make of Florence and Aileen, I expected they would see through this rig instantly.

HILTON. They haven't looked at it yet—or at us. The only girls that have taken the trouble to be decent to us are the only two we didn't know, and of course, they wouldn't get onto it. What are their names? The one with the light hair strikes me.

ALLEN. She's Patty. Cost me a quarter to find out that much from Nora; and I didn't get her last name then. The other one's Peggy. She's the one I aimed the quarter at.

HILTON. If it weren't so deuced awkward, we'd let them into the secret.

ALLEN. Don't you think of it, old fellow. They'd never speak to us again. We'll give Florence and Aileen one more chance——

HILTON. Yes; and if they can't see through a hole in a ladder, then it's all up with them. Say, though; aren't Peggy and

Patty great. We'll have to hunt them up in New York next winter, Glenn. Great Cæsar's ghost, Glenn, look. Here they are coming up the walk now. Fig and hemlock! Where's my wig? *(They try to assume disguises, get wigs on wrong end to, and finally gather up their belongings and rush off R. They see NORA behind screen; she drops to a sitting posture in terror)*

ALLEN *(threatening NORA)*. If you dare breathe a word of this to any one, I'll murder you in cold blood.

HILTON *(giving her money)*. Here's a dollar, Nora. Mum's the word, you know. *(As they EXIT R. ALLEN drops letter from coat)*

ENTER PEGGY and PATTY L. D. PATTY carries handkerchief, puts it gingerly on table.

NORA *(appearing from behind screen, crying and wringing hands)*. Help! Murder! Help! Oh, we'll all be slaughtered in cold blood!

PEGGY. Why, what's the matter, Nora?

NORA. Oh, Miss Peggy, I've been threatened to death. The house is running with gore.

PATTY. Nonsense! You've been at Aunt Charity's library again.

NORA. No; I ain't. An' if you'd'a seen the sight I seen jest now with my own eyes, your blood would 'a' run cold. Them two bloody villiuns, them perfessors, is thieves an' murderers. I've had my suspicions of 'em from the first and had a watchful eye on 'em. I've shaddered 'em to the ground and obliged 'em to lift the mask and show their hand. Miss Patty, I seen it with my own eyes; every livin' hair on their heads is as false as their double-dyed characters. I seen 'em take 'em off jest now when they thought they was alone, and, oh, Miss Patty, the things they said! They're goin' to tie Aunt Charity to a big rock an' steal her diamond necklace. They're goin' to give Miss Florence and Miss Aileen one chance to escape, an' if they don't take that, they're goin' to tie them to the top round of a ladder, and they're goin' to rob you too, Miss, when they get back to New York, an' they said I *(Sobbing)* if—I ever—di—divulged their horrible secret, they'd murder me in cold blood, they did, Miss, an' it's all as true as I'm standin' here.

PEGGY *(to PATTY)*. Here's melodrama while you wait. *(To NORA)* Nora, I realize as fully as do you, the terror and seri-

ousness of the situation. You've been a brave ally, but—lie low; do not breathe a word of this to any one. Remember, walls have ears. Listen; I will help you. I am Mrs. Sherlock Holmes, at your service, and this is my friend, Miss Watson.

NORA. Why, you ain't disguised, too?

PATTY. Never you mind about that. Run along now, and report any new discovery you may make.

NORA (*aside*). The plot thickens.

[EXIT R. D.]

PATTY. Well, what do you make of it, Miss Holmes? Of course it's—

PEGGY. Of course it is. (*Both laugh heartily*)

PATTY (*tragically*). Ha! A clew! (*Picks up letter*) What better clue could one have than a letter dropped, doubtless, by the villain on his way to the scene of the crime?

PEGGY. Read it.

PATTY. Shall I?

PEGGY. Of course. Anything is justifiable when human life is at stake.

PATTY (*looking at letter*). Oh, say, Peg; this is just great. It's addressed to Mr. Glenn Allen.

PEGGY. Hurrah! Just as I expected. Who says we are not detectives?

PATTY. It's from Mrs. Connor. Just listen. (*Reads*) "Honored gentlemen:—this cottage is especially designed for professional gentlemen of advanced years—"

PEGGY. That's Aunt Charity all over and over.

PATTY. And here's some more of Aunt Charity. (*Reads*) "We assure you that the gastronomic accommodations are above reproach, the location of undisturbed serenity. In return we require references as to the applicant's character, morality, and sobriety. None but those who fulfill the conditions need apply." Oh, Peggy, here's where Mrs. Connor comes in. (*Reads*) "Excuse me for being so inquisitive. I'd rather have young people round; it ain't so hard to feed 'em but this is to satisfy Miss Charity, though I don't suppose you know who she is. If you are in a hurry, you can bring your recommendations with you. Yours truly, Mary Connor."

PEGGY (*laughing*). Oh, Patty, I shall die; I know I shall.

PATTY. Hush; some one's coming. Probably Mr. Glenn Allen, alias Professor Aristotle Ambrose (*Deep bow*) and Mr. Addison Hilton, his accomplice, otherwise known as Professor Pygmalion Hawkins.

ENTER PROFESSORS R. D., *wearing disguises.*

PEGGY. Good afternoon, gentlemen. We were just talking about you. Speak of angels, you know— (PROFESSORS *bow*) There's a large island near here, Cabbage island, they call it. We went over there for a picnic the other day, and—take my word for it—it was just writhing with caterpillars, great, green, creepy things, ugh! Safe to say, we didn't camp there for our picnic, but moved on to the spot where the population was less dense. However, my friend, Miss Drew here, who is deeply interested in biology, insisted on bringing away one of the most gruesome specimens. Where is it, Patty?

PATTY (*taking handkerchief from table*). Here it is. What can I do with it, Professor, to make it blossom—into a butterfly?

HILTON (*poking it nervously*). But it into soft soil and gif it blenty of vater.

PEGGY. What kind of butterfly will it become, do you think, Professor Ambrose?

ALLEN (*prodding it*). Er—at this stage of development er—it would be difficult to say, but—er—probably a—er—chryssilis terotae.

PATTY. But we don't understand technical terms. What color will it be?

ALLEN. Why—er—generally they—er— (*Aside to HILTON*) Say something, why don't you?

HILTON (*stooping very low to examine it*). It—it's red, Miss Patty, mit vite stripes and plue stars.

PATTY. How strange! I never saw one in my life.

ALLEN. They are rare, Miss Patty.

PEGGY. If you would care for some of the specimens, Patty and I might row you over to the island as soon as the girls return with the boat.

ALLEN. Thanks, Miss Peggy, we certainly do want the specimens. But I can row. I used to be stroke on the Varsity in college.

HILTON. You bet. He's a dandy. (ALLEN *seizes him*) Er—I mean——

ALLEN. Professor Hawkins, such language! (*To girls*) He's living with a nephew who is attending college.

PEGGY. I see. I've taught my grandfather to say, "Come off and quit your kiddin'." (ENTER GIRLS C. D. PEGGY and PATTY DOWN R., MEN C.) Hello, girls. You back?

ALLEN. Good afternoon, young ladies.

HILTON. Good afternoon, young ladies. (*GIRLS pass the MEN disdainfully without speaking. GRACE, EMILY, FLORENCE, and AUGUSTA go to table; AILEEN and ALBERTA to divan, where they take books and read; ADA to fireplace*)

FLORENCE. Isn't this the limit for dullness? But while Aunt Charity's away, I suppose we might as well make ourselves miserable with a game of whist. (*Gets cards from under piano and gum from other hiding-places. EMILY discovers worm in handkerchief, shrieks, throws it out of window; GIRLS sit at table*) You deal, Emily. I suppose Augusta and I will play partners as usual. (*EMILY deals*)

HILTON (*going to divan*). Did you enjoy your boat ride, Miss Aileen? (*AILEEN closes book violently and goes front to PEGGY and PATTY, followed by ALBERTA. HILTON puckers his face and twirls his thumbs*)

FLORENCE. Hearts are trumps. I never have any luck on red. (*GIRLS play*)

ALBERTA. You two girls are extremely considerate of our ancient friends, the professors.

AILEEN. Considerate! Peggy'd flirt with a scarecrow.

PEGGY. We ought always to be kind and thoughtful to elderly people.

AILEEN. Watch Peggy practice that doctrine on Aunt Charity.

ALBERTA (*laying hands on PEGGY's back*). Peggy dear——

PEGGY (*jumping up*). Ow! Is there a caterpillar?

ALBERTA. I was just feeling if your wings were sprouting. (*PEGGY sits angrily*)

ALLEN (*near table*). Do you play auction bridge, Miss Florence?

FLORENCE (*without noticing him*). Your turn again, Augusta.

AUGUSTA. No; you took that trick.

ENTER AUNT CHARITY L. D.

AUNT C. (*rushing to HILTON*). Have you forgotten our appointment, my dear Professor? (*Pantomime of conversation*)

GRACE. She never even saw us. (*PEGGY and PATTY cross to L.*)

ALLEN (*front*). Are you ready to show us that wonderful island, Miss Peggy?

PEGGY. Yes; and there's just time before tea. (*EXEUNT PEGGY and PATTY C. D. ALLEN stops at exit and coughs to attract HILTON's attention*).

AUNT C. (*holding HILTON by buttonhole*). This is all so interesting, my dear Professor, but I don't yet understand—

ALLEN. I am going for those specimens the young ladies told us of. [EXIT ALLEN C. D.]

HILTON. Mine cracious! Dose putterflies. (*Breaks away from AUNT CHARITY and runs toward C. D.*)

AUNT C. But, Professor, our walk?

HILTON. We are going mit de young ladies for a poat ride. [EXIT C. D.]

AUNT C. The doddering old fossils! To be taken in by a pretty face! (*Throws butterfly net; snatches off hat; EXIT L. D.*)

ALL (*rising*). How unmaidenly!

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.—*Same as ACT I. Evening of same day. Stage dark except for fire in fireplace.*

ENTER PEGGY *cautiously* L. D., *creeps across stage, collides with chair making a slight noise, stifles a scream, drops match-box, picks it up in haste, and disappears R. D. into kitchen. A rustle is heard from R. D., then the crackle of fire (made by crumpling stiff paper) and the red glare of fire (red tableau lights) is seen through R. D. PEGGY ENTERS from R. D. and runs across stage.*

PEGGY. Help! Help! Fire! Fire! Fire! (*Runs back to R. D.*) Oh dear, why doesn't somebody come! (*Calls*) Fire! It's spreading so much faster than I had any idea it could. (*Wrings hands*) I'll have to throw some water on it myself. [EXIT R. D.]

ENTER GIRLS L. D.; *they huddle together UP stage.*

EMILY. Where's the fire?

AUGUSTA. What is it?

AILEEN. Oh! We shall all be burned alive.

ADA. What shall we do?

PATTY (*excitedly at R. D.*). Peggy dear, do come out of that awful room. Oh-h-h! Don't do that. Peggy! Help!

ENTER L. D. ALLEN and HILTON, *without disguises, they rush across stage.*

ALLEN. } Here! Coming!

[EXEUNT R. D.

FLORENCE. Addison Hilton!

EMILY. Glenn Allen!

GRACE. Where did they come from?

ENTER MRS. CONNOR L. D.

MRS. C. (*running across stage to R. D.*) Why be yez all a-standin' there like bumps on a log wid my house a-burnin' down over my head? [EXIT R. D.

ENTER AUNT CHARITY L. D., *also disheveled.*

AUNT C. (*same action*). How terrible! A fitting ending to such a wretched day. Who is fighting the flames? [EXIT R. D.

AILEEN. Well, if this hasn't been an eventful day! Wasn't it queer? Peggy declared she felt it in her bones that something was going to happen.

AUGUSTA. I know it. She was so sure that she wouldn't let us go to bed.

EMILY. And wasn't it strange that she should go down-stairs just in time to discover the fire and give the alarm.

ALBERTA. I'll never make sport of her presentiments again.

AILEEN. And to think of Addison and Glenn—

PEGGY (*from the kitchen*) It's all over, girls. Come out and view the ruins. [EXEUNT GIRLS R. D.

ENTER PEGGY and GLENN ALLEN R. D.

PEGGY. Where's Patty?

GLENN. The last I saw of her she was disappearing in the direction of the veranda with Professor Hawkins. Let me give you this chair; you must be considerably unnerved. (*PEGGY sits near table*)

PEGGY. When you stop to consider that it was only a fire in the wood-box—

ALLEN. That makes no difference. When I saw you dash that water on the fire—Well, I'd known all the time that you were good and sweet and kind, but I hadn't known that you were

a real heroine. (PEGGY *attempts to rise*) One moment, Miss Hinds. (PEGGY *resumes her seat*) I realize that my conduct must seem abominable, but may I have one minute in which to explain?

PEGGY (*looking down*). Yes.

ALLEN. Although we had never met you, we had known the other girls for a long time.

PEGGY (*roguishly*). Especially?

ALLEN. Yes, it's true; especially Florence and Aileen. And when we found that only old men might come here, we disguised, expecting that they would see through our rigs at once and we'd have no end of fun. We had never imagined they could be so supercilious and we decided not to let them in at once. Then you and Miss Patty were so good to us old fogies that we decided not to let them in at all, but to procure introductions to you when we got back to town. But now you know all about it and I want to know if you will forgive us—that is—hang it, I don't care whether you forgive Ad. or not, but will you forgive me?

PEGGY. Why, certainly, I forgive you. There was no harm in it after all. But Florence and Aileen—will they forgive you?

ALLEN. We're about square with Florence and Aileen. The only other favor I'll ask—now—is that you won't forget me when we go back to New York.

PEGGY (*jumping up*). Wait. It's my turn. We're going to be here only three days more.

ALLEN. That's true—more's the pity.

PEGGY. And I've known you ever since the day when you took off your disguises here and dropped your letter as you ran.

ALLEN. You *HAVE*?

PEGGY. And I thought it was a shame to lose all these three days and—I know you'll hate me now—but I wanted to make you appear without your disguises; so I set that wood-box on fire myself—so there! (*Drops face in arms on table*)

ALLEN. Peggy, you're a trump. I was too stupid to see any way out. You're more than a heroine; you're a genius. Won't you shake hands? (PEGGY *risés and gives him her hand as HILTON and PATTY appear c.*)

HILTON. Are we going to be in the way?

ALLEN. Not a bit. You were gone so long we didn't know but you were in search of a chrissilis terotae.

PATTY. Rather we have been resolving how two professors can transform themselves into a whole fire-brigade.

ENTER GIRLS R. D.

AILEEN. You're base deceivers, all of you. We've heard the whole story in the kitchen, but we've decided to forgive you.

FLORENCE. We'll get our revenge some time. Won't we bury you in rice?

EMILY. And old shoes! I'll have a dozen pairs myself.

ENTER AUNT CHARITY *and* MRS. CONNOR R. D.

AUNT C. (*pushes her way through the knot of GIRLS to ALLEN and HILTON*). You are an impostor, sir—two of them. Mrs. Connor, I demand that these men be sent away at once.

MRS. C. Faith, yez old curlpapered spalpeen, did yez think I'd sind away the hayroes that saved me wood-box an' maybe mesilf from perishin' in the conflaguration? No, sorr! (*To HILTON and ALLEN*) Ye can stay till the lake freezes over, and what's more, ye kin have yer room rint free.

CURTAIN.

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